

**JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
RE: RE-APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF JUSTICE CHASE T. ROGERS**

**TESTIMONY OF ATTORNEY SHARON WICKS DORNFELD
9 APRIL 2015**

To Senator Coleman, Rep. Tong, and Members of the Committee:

I am a practicing attorney and have had the honor to serve as a member of the Pro Bono Committee of the Judicial Branch Public Service and Trust Commission since 2012. I am also a former Chair of the Family Law Section of the Connecticut Bar Association.

I write to support the reappointment of Chase T. Rogers as Chief Justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court. Justice Rogers has demonstrated an admirable level of diligence, scholarship and integrity as a Superior Court judge, an Appellate Court judge, and as a Supreme Court justice. While I may not always agree with her decisions, there can be no doubt that they are firmly reasoned and based on the law.

Justice Rogers has guided the Judicial Branch through dramatic changes in court procedures and practices as a made necessary by the enormous influx of self-represented parties. Under Justice Rogers' leadership, the Judicial Branch has implemented numerous efforts to increase accessibility to the courts, simplify court procedures, offer enhanced explanations of the law applicable to various types of cases, and provide step-by-step instructions (often via video and multiple languages) for everything from filling out an appearance form to participating in and Appellate Court pre-argument conference. As one result of her efforts, the Connecticut Judicial Branch website received a "Top 10 Websites" Award from the Forum on Advancement of Court Technology in 2014.

Contrary to the endless representations of a very few disgruntled litigants, a recent survey of people with recent family court involvement found that nearly three quarters of the participants were satisfied or very satisfied with their overall court experience. This result is remarkable considering the unhappy circumstances which brought the survey respondents to the courts. http://www.jud.ct.gov/family/Family_Matters_Satisfaction_Study.pdf

Perhaps the most persuasive argument in favor of Justice Rogers' re-appointment is her reported comment after reviewing the annual report of the Pro Bono Committee, which reflects all of the numerous and varied initiatives to provide free access to lawyers and legal advice for low income persons. It is invariably the same: "That's great. What else can we do?"

I urge your support for her re-appointment.